

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

10th January 2006

PRESENT:

Labour Group

Councillor Taylor (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bell, Carroll, Isham, Shepherd and Wilkins (substitute for Councillor Whyman M.B.E).

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Bale, Ford and Mrs. Hall.

Independent Member

Councillor Mrs. Walton.

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Whyman M.B.E. (Labour Group).

EDS/39. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

(a) Councillor John Stone

Members observed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor John Stone, who had passed away just before Christmas. Tributes were led by the Deputy Leader of the Council, who spoke of his interest in conservation and environmental issues. Councillor Stone would be missed and it was asked that condolences be given to his wife. Councillor Bale endorsed these sentiments and spoke of the quiet way in which he fulfilled his role as a Councillor. The Chair also paid tribute to Councillor Stone's environmental conscience.

(b) Bird Flu

Councillor Atkin referred to guidance from DEFRA and questioned whether the Council had plans in place to deal with an outbreak of bird flu. The Chair commented that the Council had emergency planning procedures and the Head of Environmental Services advised that Derbyshire County Council had primary responsibility for the emergency planning function. The Deputy Leader felt it important not to cause panic, whilst not taking this issue too lightly. The areas where people had contracted bird flu to date were ones of extreme poverty, where livestock was kept in residential property. The Committee should respect the advice given to date and rely on Officers both here and at Derbyshire County Council to take appropriate action, where necessary.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**EDS/40. SERVICE ESTIMATES 2005/2006 AND 2006/2007**

A report was submitted on the Committee's probable out-turn for 2005/06 and the estimate of net revenue expenditure for 2006/07. It was proposed that these estimates would be included in the consolidated budget of the Council, subject to the Council's overall financial position. The report also set out proposals for the level of fees and charges under the responsibility of the Committee for the next financial year. A summary was included of the Committee's existing Capital Investment Programme.

The Committee's net revenue expenditure was summarised in an Appendix to the report, which set out the estimates for each main cost centre and aggregated several of the main service areas. Notes were provided to explain the main changes where these had occurred and a table gave an analysis of estimated net revenue expenditure. There were no major variances across the Committee's services, apart from those anticipated and for which provision had been included within the overall financial plan. A summary was provided of changes in budgets for Planning Services, Waste Collection and Street Cleansing, and Environmental Services.

A further Appendix provided a "line by line" breakdown of the Committee's services. The detail of the report looked at Capital Charges, comprising interest charges, depreciation and deferred charges. It was noted that capital charges were purely accounting adjustments. Central departmental and service recharges were discussed together with accounting for pensions and particularly the FRS17 adjustment.

The budget for 2006/07 had initially been compiled at November 2005 prices. An allowance for inflation had been included where it was considered unavoidable, to calculate the cash limit estimate for 2006/07. Details were provided of the assumptions built into the estimates.

Capital investment was considered and the report outlined the Committee's current schemes. A further appendix provided a schedule of the proposed fees and charges to operate from 1st April 2006, together with a comparison to the existing charge. No major changes were proposed and generally fees and charges would be increased by around the rate of inflation.

With regard to waste collection and street cleansing, the Head of Finance and Property Services gave further information about a recycling grant scheme and the related conditions. He highlighted the extra income received by the Council for liquor licensing and the downturn in land charges fee income.

Councillor Wilkins questioned whether the fees and charges imposed covered service costs generally. The Officer replied that this was not the case when overheads were taken into account. The amounts levied by other local authorities were taken into account in determining this Council's fees and charges. The Officer referred to the last comprehensive review of fees and charges and the potential for a further review to be undertaken.

Councillor Mrs. Hall was concerned over the cost levied for the collection of bulky refuse. She spoke about fly tipping problems in the Seales Ward and

gave an example of the problems experienced by a resident in seeking to dispose of bulky refuse items at the local civic amenity site. Councillor Taylor advised that the latter issue had been raised with Derbyshire County Council. There was a need to clarify those items which could not be accepted at the civic amenity site and the Chair referred to the change of contractor at the Newhall facility. With regard to the charges imposed for the collection of bulky refuse, the Chair explained that a cost was incurred by the Council and this refuse added to the Council's waste figures. He referred to the review undertaken by the Committee previously and reminded of the Council's waste minimisation responsibilities. Councillor Mrs. Hall gave other examples of fly tipping problems and the Chair reminded that fly tipping was illegal. Through new legislation, the Council would be able to impose higher fines. The Head of Environmental Services provided further information on waste minimisation and fly tipping issues, including the increased enforcement planned. He spoke of the powers available to the Authority under new legislation. The Deputy Chief Executive reminded that previously the Committee held the view, that given the cost of replacement products, there was a relatively small cost to dispose of an old item properly.

Councillor Isham recalled that suppliers used to charge for the removal of old items and now would not provide this service. She spoke of the value of the service and Members were reminded that up to five items could be removed on each occasion for the fee levied. Councillor Carroll recalled that a charge was not levied for this service previously, because of the fear of fly tipping. There was a need to reduce waste and she recalled that charges were introduced following advice from District Audit. This was confirmed by the Deputy Chief Executive, who concluded that our experience did not indicate a significant increase in fly tipping after the introduction of a charge. Councillor Wilkins commented that as well as being illegal, fly tipping was environmentally anti-social. There was a facility within the District, open nearly every day of the year. He referred also to overflowing paper recycling banks. Councillor Ford added that through the Council's newspaper, residents could be reminded of the implications of fly tipping and the costs of clearance. Councillor Mrs. Walton congratulated the Clean Team, speaking particularly about clearance of the recycling site in Hilton. It was also noted that the Clean Team was now seeking to identify offenders, so that prosecutions could take place. Congratulations were also voiced for the Refuse Teams, for the post Christmas collection arrangements. The Deputy Chief Executive was asked to pass on the thanks of the Committee to the employees concerned.

Councillor Atkin explained the difficulties experienced by a resident in seeking to dispose of fridges at a civic amenity site. He had seen an increase in fly tipping in his ward. The Member also referred to a recent article on teletext about tyre disposal arrangements in another area. The Head of Environmental Services explained that this function was the Environment Agency's and the Chair gave detail on the liaison arrangements with that Agency. Councillor Ford felt that the Clean Team might be a victim of its own success, as repeated fly tipping took place in certain areas. With regard to bulky waste, the Chair referred to the waste hierarchy and the opportunity to reuse some items through initiatives like the Furniture Project.

Councillor Bell sought further information on the budget variations relating to development control applications. The Head of Finance and Property Services explained the approach taken, to estimate income levels for future

years. The Member noted the fast growing nature of the District, but conservative estimates were made of planning fee income. A question was submitted on the planning framework and the Deputy Chief Executive explained the requirements placed on this section, particularly with regard to environmental and sustainability issues. He referred to the planning delivery grant, which met some of the additional costs and discussed the future position after this funding finished. Councillor Bell then referred to the detailed revenue estimates and particularly the recycling credit from Derbyshire County Council. He noted that recycling activity was increasing, but the level of credit was projected to reduce. The Head of Environmental Services explained how the assessment of recycling credits had been reviewed. In future years, the Council would have a closer landfill facility and the level of credit was based on the costs of waste disposal. A more detailed reply would be provided to Councillor Bell on this issue. In response to a further question from the Member, the Head of Finance and Property Services confirmed the accounting approach to group several employee costs. In response to a question on liquor licensing and the projected shortfall in funding, it was noted that this should be reflected in future Government settlements. Councillor Bell then referred to central service recharges and the Officer explained those charges relating to Legal and Members costs, together with those for the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. He referred Members to the covering report and explained the measures used to assess use of the CRM and to give an allocation of cost. Finally, Councillor Bell referred to Gershon savings and he questioned whether the report could have highlighted the savings achieved. This point was acknowledged by the Officer, who informed that the savings were highlighted in a report to the Finance and Management Committee.

Councillor Atkin sought further information about the budgets associated with the Parish Lengthsman Scheme, that for public clocks and with regard to waste collection. The Officer provided clarification on each of these issues. Councillor Ford noted the savings in costs for public conveniences and he questioned whether this could be re-utilised towards the cost of the facility in Willington. It was noted that this would require a service development proposal being submitted to the Finance and Management Committee. The Member was also advised of the treatment of Gershon savings and this proposal would effectively be a change in service level. Councillor Bale commented on the removal of abandoned vehicles and these should be considered an asset rather than a liability, given the current value of scrap steel.

The Committee was then asked to consider the "long list" of service proposals. A document had been circulated showing proposals categorised by the Corporate Plan themes and those relating to this policy committee were highlighted. The document would be considered by all policy committees and then consultation would take place on the service proposals. Members feedback was sought in time for the Finance and Management Committee on 17th January 2006.

Councillor Ford commented on the service proposal for preventing floods and other emergencies and the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that this proposal sought to raise awareness of the issue. Councillor Bale was delighted with the section on rural issues. Councillor Carroll proposed that the list be accepted and used as part of the budget consultation. Members were mindful of the opportunity to make further comments prior to the

Finance and Management Committee.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the estimates of Revenue Income and Expenditure for 2005/06 and 2006/07 for the Committee's services be recommended to the Finance and Management Committee for approval.***
- (2) That the Committee's proposed fees and charges for 2006/07 be approved.***
- (3) That the Committee accepts the "Long List" of proposals relating to its services and that Members be given the opportunity through their political groups to give further consideration to this document, with any comments being submitted to the Finance and Management Committee at its Meeting on 17th January 2006.***

EDS/41. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF WAY FUNCTION FROM POLICY AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION TO PLANNING SERVICES (Paragraph 11)

The Committee approved the transfer of this function.

INCREASING THE UNIFORMED PRESENCE IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE (Paragraph 1)

The Committee agreed proposals for the introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Wardens and made recommendations to the Finance and Management Committee regarding the staffing implications.

S. TAYLOR

CHAIR